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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 012603

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: UN MAY CONSIDER DDR PROGRAM FOR COLOMBIA;
HUMANITARIAN ACTION PLAN IN TROUBLE

REF: BOGOTA 11339

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Begin Summary: UN Special Advisor on Colombia James LeMoyne, visiting Bogota this week, told major donors on December 8 that the UN was considering a demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) program for Colombia, assuming certain conditions were met. UNDP is also exploring the possibility of a major conference on DDR to highlight the issue in Colombia. Per reftel, LeMoyne expressed continuing concern about the "deteriorating" GOC-UN relationship in all three areas of engagement -- human rights, good offices, and humanitarian assistance. He said that UN officials in New York "were stunned" that a presumed agreement on a humanitarian action plan had recently unraveled, and appealed to donors to help the UN and GOC fix it. He believes that GOC officials are convinced that the document in its current form would have been used as another vehicle to criticize Colombia. Worse, he believes conceptual and ideological differences have emerged between the GOC and UN over how the conflict is seen. LeMoyne noted that the UN-GOC, high level working group would finally meet in New York the week of January 17 and hoped these issues would be addressed. End Summary.

12. (C) On December 8, Swedish charge arranged a meeting with major donors for visiting UN special advisor on Colombia James LeMoyne. Along with the UNDP Resident Representative, Ambassadors from Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK were present. Polcouns represented the U.S. LeMoyne will remain in Bogota until December 10, and has meetings planned with FM Barco, Peace Commissioner Restrepo, Senator Pardo, the Papal Nuncio, and various other embassies. Issues covered included UN discussions about a demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) program, delays in the launch of the humanitarian action plan (HAP), and the GOC-UN relationship.

DEMOBILIZATION, DISARMAMENT AND REINTEGRATION (DDR)

13. (C) LeMoyne said that preliminary discussions were underway at UN Headquarters about committing to a DDR program in Colombia. The focus was reinsertion. While the GOC was offering as much as it could, it would not be enough, resulting, he said, in the return of ex-fighters into guerrilla or criminal groups. According to LeMoyne, senior UN officials including the SYG, U/SYG Prendergast and Chef de Cabinet Riza, were signaling a "qualified maybe" and had solicited possible parameters and conditions for such a program. While acknowledging that the UN had been too extreme in the past on the conditions it demanded of the GOC, LeMoyne said the UN would probably insist on at least three: (1) an official GOC request; (2) the creation of a separate GOC agency to manage DDR; and (3) passage of the "Law for Justice and Reparations." He stressed that these were still at the discussion stage, and while he awaited a political green light from the 38th floor, he did have instructions to consult with major donors on the issue. The group's response to the conditions was unenthusiastic (except for Switzerland) and LeMoyne was asked to investigate whether the UN had imposed similar conditions on other governments which hosted a UN DDR program.

14. (C) UNDP Resident Representative Alfredo Witschi said that, in light of the discussions in New York, local agency reps were reviewing how the UN system could become involved in DDR. He recommended that the issue be discussed in Cartagena in February to ensure a strong signal of support from the international community. One idea being considered was an international conference on DDR, led by Iqbal Riza, featuring countries which had "come out the other end" of a DDR process. Witschi also noted that the humanitarian action plan still under discussion (see para 7) with the GOC did not include a DDR component, but UN agencies were preparing themselves should a consensus emerge to add one. Swedish charge Ingemar Cederberg announced that the GOS had identified an additional USD 300,000 as a potential contribution to UNDP, a substantial portion of which would likely be earmarked for DDR activities.

UN-GOC RELATIONS DETERIORATE FURTHER: GOC BALKS AT

HUMANITARIAN ACTION PLAN

15. (C) LeMoyne underscored that discussions on a DDR program could be affected by the increasingly strained relations between the GOC and the UN. He reviewed the state of play, mostly repeating what he shared with the Ambassador on October 30, reported reftel. He said that, in addition to the ongoing problems with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the good offices role (i.e. his own operation), the GOC was now balking at the latest version of the humanitarian action plan.

16. (C) LeMoyne hypothesized that GOC officials, including the President, Vice President, Foreign Minister, UN permrep, and Peace Commissioner, have concluded that the GOC erred in permitting a large UN presence in the country, and that the UN has taken unfair advantage. These same officials believed that there remains a conceptual and ideological difference between the way they and the UN see the conflict. According to LeMoyne, the GOC views it as terrorism, "in the Chechnya model," not an internal conflict as the UN labels it. Furthermore, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bogota has become the enemy, neither transparent nor effective, and the GOC was now prepared to "take it on."

17. (C) According to LeMoyne, the apparent failure of UN humanitarian agencies and the GOC to reach final agreement on a humanitarian action plan "stunned us in New York." He surmised that the GOC, in particular its permrep in New York, concluded that the current version was drafted like a new human rights instrument that would be used to judge the GOC, and ultimately block support. He appealed to the government reps present to help the GOC and UN fix it.

18. (C) With respect to the good offices role, LeMoyne again reported that UN Secretariat officials remained inclined to suspend the good offices operation or reduce it significantly. He also hinted that this would lead to his departure.

19. (C) LeMoyne reported that the GOC-UN, high level working group, led by FM Barco on the Colombian side and U/SYG Prendergast on the UN side, would finally meet the week of January 17 in New York. Given the ongoing difficulties with the relationship, LeMoyne had been ordered back to New York on Monday by Prendergast for two days of meetings, scrapping a scheduled visit to Brussels. A note for the SYG on the state of play will be prepared before Christmas in preparation for the January meeting.

----- COMMENT -----

10.(C) Following the meeting, UK Ambassador Thomas Duggin suggested that LeMoyne was "in overdrive crisis mode," exaggerating the problem between the GOC and the UN. That said, GOC confidence in the UN has deteriorated to the point that any UN initiative, including one as potentially useful as a humanitarian action plan, is suspect. This is something we should work to reverse in New York, Geneva and Bogota. UNDP's Witschi admitted to considerable dissension within the UN country team over the "pro-consul attitude" of OHCHR director Michael Fruhling. According to Witschi, Fruhling was fuming that UNDP/Bogota recommended HCHR Louise Arbour attend the GOC-UN high level meeting the week of January 17 instead of Fruhling. Witschi believes that a high level GOC intervention with the HCHR is the only way to rein in Fruhling, and remains puzzled as to why it has not happened yet.

WOOD